



# **Distance Learning Battle Staff NCO Course Full-Time to USAREUR**

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**F**ORT MONROE, Va. — United States Army Europe will begin using distance learning courses to fill a training need in 2000.

Annual personnel rotations create a constant shortage of NCOs qualified for battle staff positions.

“Currently, there are 697 2S (battle staff NCO) coded positions in USAREUR. USAREUR is short 215 qualified personnel to fill these slots,” said Lt. Col. Carolyn Smith, Chief, Combined Arms Training Center for 7th Army Training Command, at Vilseck, Germany.

“Distance learning, once fully operational, should produce 240 BSNCO-trained soldiers a year.”

USAREUR officials say these qualified NCOs can be produced in three different distance learning classes taught by the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, each year. They will be similar to the “test” BSNCO held at Vilseck in November and December. Another trial course will be conducted this spring to work out any operational and logistical problems that might arise.

Of 80 staff sergeants, sergeants first class, and master sergeants who began Phase I of the course, 14 were no-shows in November or they failed the Army Physical Fitness Test. Phase I is home-study written material covering common core subjects.

The 66 remaining students began Phase II in four classrooms at Vilseck. Three of the classrooms were connected to a deployable distance learning classroom. USASMA instructors at Fort Bliss taught the course through videoteletraining, while four assistant instructors were on site to assist students.

“We linked the four AIs [assistant instructors] by radio with the master controller and each classroom,” said Dr. Carl Wyatt, Chief of Deployable Training, Deputy Chief of Staff for Training at Training and Doctrine Command.

“An AI could see if a soldier didn’t quite understand a point in the class, and he would tell the master controller to relay a message to USASMA to touch on that point again in the summary.”

Each classroom represented a “battle group,” and the students in them were on battle staffs that had different missions. Each of the battle groups concluded the course with a graded simulation-based command post exercise at Hohenfels.

One student failed the course academically, a rate comparable to resident courses at Fort Bliss, according to Sgt. Maj. Dan Hubbard of USASMA. Grade averages were also similar to resident scores.

USASMA conducts regularly scheduled distance learning BSNCO at four sites in the United States: Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Hood, Texas; and Fort Sill, Okla. USASMA will add Fort Polk, La., to the list this summer. A Total Army Training System BSNCO is also offered at Fort McCoy, Wis., a U.S. Army Reserve post. Both active and reserve component soldiers attend the TATS course.

“The current distance learning course design is a success and delivers quality training to standard,” Hubbard said. “We are currently evaluating ways to integrate digital staff tasks into the course to support the digital force in the 21st century.”

**Editor’s Note:** Caldwell is a writer with Training and Doctrine Command’s Public Affairs Office at Fort Monroe, Va. This information is in the public domain at <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/> on the World Wide Web.